



# *The Insider*

[www.senate.mi.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski)

## **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**June 27, 2005**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

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### **Mickey's Letter Bag**

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Dear Senator:

Please vote yes on Senate Bill 246. Education is key to our state being able to attract business to diversify our economy. I know we are in tough economic times, but if we are going to be able to help this state, properly funded schools is the only way. If we continue to short-change schools, we will only continue to be passed up for new business as companies look to states that have better educated populations.

Casimir Rakowski  
Clinton Township

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Dear Senator Switalski,

I am writing to express to you my deep concerns about the proposed funding formulas for the state's universities in next year's budget bills. I work at a Michigan university. As you are very much aware, Michigan has been under severe budget constraints for the past four years. During this time, Michigan's universities have faced significant reductions to funding, while agreeing to restrain tuition increases to inflationary increase levels.

Higher Education has weathered these budget storms by reducing expenditures and streamlining services while not compromising academic standards or access to education. But with continued budget pressures, this is getting more and more difficult. Recently two different funding formulas for higher education have been proposed by the Senate and House. I believe that now, during a time of significant budget crisis, is not the time to implement a funding formula for the following reasons:

... First, any implemented formula should utilize new revenues only, not redistribute current revenues in a manner that results in some universities actually getting 5 percent less money than they currently receive.

... Second, the funding formulas in both the House and Senate versions reimburse associate degrees excessively in relation to other degrees. This simply does not make sense given that associate degrees are the primary mission of community colleges, not of universities.

... Third, we must take great care in evaluating the relative costs of educating different kinds of health professional programs to accurately reflect their actual costs. Under this formula the degrees for medical doctors and nurses, who are very expensive to educate, count the same as undergraduate degrees in much less expensive health programs.

... Finally, the severe cuts to some universities and the sharp increases to others are based on a formula that is unique in higher education. Other states have used formulas for years to fund higher education and the formula being used varies here greatly from those of states with considerable experience with formulas. We need a blue-ribbon panel to conduct a study of the use of formulas and to recommend a reasonable one to the Legislature.

In today's diverse economy, we all know how crucial higher education success is to an individual, to families and our state's economy. We must strive to ensure that high quality higher education is affordable and attainable to anyone wanting an education, no matter where they live. I look forward to hearing your views on this issue.

Sincerely,

Mark Baskaran  
Sterling Heights

*Dear Mark:*

*Thanks for your e-mail. I voted against the higher education budget as proposed because of the poorly drafted formulas used that were not objective in nature. I will continue to advocate for equitable funding for all public universities.*

*Mickey*

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## **K-12 Public Education Funding Takes Center Stage in Legislature**

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The last two weeks have featured much discussion on state funding for K-12 public education. The State Senate and State House both passed their respective spending plans for the upcoming fiscal year and it is expected that final details will be negotiated via conference committee.

The Senate's K-12 School Aid Budget (Senate Bill 279) passed on June 16 with a 33-4 vote. The Senate version would raise the minimum per pupil foundation grant by \$175 for K-12 public schools, the first such increase in three years. My efforts to restore 20J "hold-harmless" and at-risk funding to their current levels was successful, alleviating a potential negative impact on education. (For more information, please see the June 10, 2005 edition of the Insider E-Newsletter.)

Meanwhile, the Michigan House also passed a spending bill that would increase the per pupil foundation grant by \$175. Their plan differed from the Senate's however, in that it tried to address funding disparities among school districts.

The House plan calls for an additional amount of funding, up to \$25, to go to school districts that receive less than \$7,200 per pupil. This increase would not raise the per pupil grant above \$7,200.

During discussion of the budget, there is a grassroots effort among the school education community and parents to address K-12 school funding. On June 21, an estimated 11,000 people attended a rally in the capitol to call for action on Senate Bill 246 and House Bill 4582.

A few days before the rally, the members of the Senate K-12 School Aid Appropriations subcommittee and Senate Education Committee held a hearing to discuss the bill.

Senate Bill 246 would guarantee automatic funding increases for K-12 public schools, public universities and community colleges by 5 percent or the rate of inflation each year, whichever is less. The bill would also be applied retroactively to make up for cuts made over the past several years.

In addition, Senate Bill 246 would cap the contributions school districts would have to pay for school retirees at 12.99% with the state picking up the costs above that figure. The bill would also eliminate a provision in current law that would allow for a pro-ration cut during a fiscal year if the School Aid Fund runs a deficit.

While I appreciate the intention behind Senate Bill 246, I do not support it because it makes a promise that Michigan Legislature may not be able to keep. It is not fiscally responsible to say that I will guarantee funding increases when I may be cutting every other sector of the government including cutting people off Medicaid, cutting revenue sharing further and closing more prisons.

I have criticized my colleagues a few years ago for promising 23 years of tax cuts, regardless of what the economy is doing, and time has shown that criticism was accurate.

During the hearing, an analyst from the nonpartisan Senate Fiscal Agency (SFA) estimated that the bill would cost the state \$1.5 billion for the upcoming fiscal year. This figure includes retroactively restoring cuts from previous years. With the state facing an estimated \$770 million in less revenue for the upcoming fiscal year than what we have now coming in, this bill would either require significant cuts or significant revenue enhancements?

I have a more moderate approach, which is to eliminate certain tax exemptions and loopholes to generate more money for our public schools. For example, I introduced a bill that would eliminate the sales tax exemption for pop and candy in vending machines, a move that would raise up to \$25 million for schools. Does it really make sense to subsidize the consumption of pop and candy at the expense of funding for our schools? Do we need to encourage kids to eat more pop and candy?

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### **What Do You Think? Starting School After Labor Day**

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Meanwhile, in other education related items, the House Education Committee passed a bill (House Bill 4803) on June 23 that would require K-12 public schools to start school after Labor Day. Supporters of the bill argue that the change would help the tourism industry while opponents contend that the issue is one where local school districts should make the determination. What do you think? Please e-mail me your comments and I will publish them in the next issue of the Insider E-Newsletter.

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## Mickey's TV Insider Show

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Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Clinton Township**

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Roseville**

Various Times  
(Comcast Channel 18)

\*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

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## Coffee Hours

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\*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

**June 27**  
**7-9 p.m.**

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library  
(35891 South Gratiot, north of 15 Mile)  
Clinton Township

**Aug. 1**  
**7-9 p.m.**

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library  
(40255 Dodge Park)  
Sterling Heights

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## Contact My Office

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### **Lansing Office**

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